

Brown University

## **Climate diplomacy and international negotiations in practice**

Fall semester

Monday, 3-5.30 pm

No prerequisite – we will learn about the basics of climate science and negotiation during the course. Yet, you should expect this course to be intellectually challenging and demanding.

You are warmly encouraged to come and share any concern with me before or after the course, send me an email or set an appointment during my office hours.

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*Alice Plane is a political analyst and a writer. She focuses on the various stakes that climate change poses to the planet's ecosystems, including human societies, with a specific perspective on equity.*

*She has worked in France, Madagascar and Afghanistan, both as a humanitarian and aid worker, as a consultant and as a diplomat. From 2016 to 2020, she has spent four years as the Head of Climate unit within the French ministry of Foreign affairs, coordinating international climate negotiations for France.*

*She is the author of a primed travel story across Central Asia and Iran and is currently finalizing a collection of climate-related short stories.*

### **Course overview**

Climate change suffers no lack of superlatives: “the defining challenge of our time” for UN Secretary General Guterres, “the urgent challenge to protect our common home” in Pope Francis’ Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, the need to rise as “an ecological civilization” in the words of Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Yet, when it comes to acts, the discrepancy can feel vertiginous: IPCC scientists, one report after another, remind us of the path yet to be taken if we are to sustain the inhabitability of our planet.

Climate negotiations lie at the equilibrium point between the (many) words and the (lesser) deeds. Such equilibrium must be found among the tactical games of negotiators, their underlying agencies, their diverging national interests and the power plays that go against the very urgency of solving all together this global threat. This makes climate diplomacy and negotiation skills all the more necessary.

Building on IPCC reports and the Paris agreement adopted in 2015, this course aims at enhancing the participants' understanding of the global climate change framework in international relations. It will give students the tools to navigate climate COPs and beyond, understanding the theoretical basis in climate science, history and international relations, as well as putting in practice the art of negotiations while attempting to honestly address possible ways forward.

## **Why should you take this course?**

Climate change is everywhere, it concerns everyone, it impacts everything and it's already there.

This is unfortunate, yet it is a fact. Take this year only: record heat in the Arctic, forest fires and heat dome in north-western Americas, cyclones in the Caribbean, flash floods in Russia, mice invasion in Australia, famine in Madagascar, locust invasion in eastern Africa... and the list is growing every week.

Whichever career you are planning for yourself, understanding where we are now, how did we get there, and where we are going with global warming is becoming a truly vital necessity.

This course will not bring you all of the answers. It will challenge you to ask the right questions – and motivate action.

It will place you in real-life situations and invite you to critically assess the material you will be given. As such, you will be provided with a limited amount of theoretical readings about climate change or climate diplomacy. You'll rather be invited to act as a climate-sensitive analyst, and think for yourself the shoulds and should-nots.

In order to help you prepare for your future professional postings, this course will also offer you diverse perspectives and contacts from climate professionals in NGOs, think tanks or governments (by visioconference, availability permitting).

It will also invite you to speak up from your own perspective, bringing your own background as a learning experience to the group.

## **Learning objectives**

- To understand what is climate change and to be aware of how transversal it is
- To have a critical and educated opinion on the news you receive about climate change
- To establish a thorough understanding of the current climate governance and its architecture
- To understand the various actors and their respective expectations
- To practice empathy and deepen perspectives by acting out in-class climate negotiations and role-plays
- To expand one's ability to intervene adequately in multilateral fora
- To build on the diverse perspectives of the course participants
- To have fun while dealing with a very serious issue

## **Texts and reading materials**

### **Required:**

- *The Paris Agreement*, 2015, ([https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf))
- *IPCC, Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C, Summary for Policy Makers, 2018*, (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>)

These two required readings are pretty short, but they are complex and will require you to get back to them time and again.

In the class portal, you will also find additional weekly readings (to be completed later on, also based on climate news: COP 26 will take place on November 1st-13th in Glasgow).

## Course content

The course is composed of three modules, each of them building on diverse global perspectives and real-life examples from « within ».

- First, the course will offer students the opportunity to understand the basics of climate change both through its science and as a political object. They will delve into its emergence as a political issue and the related questions of responsibility, justice and the burden of cost.
- Then, the course will focus on the main aspects of the Paris agreement, as a way to understand the architecture of the current global governance: what information must be shared? how does the ambition gets guaranteed? In this second module, students will practice their negotiation techniques with an introduction to game theory followed by a mock re-enactment of the adoption of the Paris agreement.
- The third and final module will allow for a critical assessment of our collective achievements when it comes to tackling climate change. This module will look into the issue of agency among climate negotiation participants. It will peek into the role of non-state actors. Finally, it will point out the missing links, concluding on a renewed understanding of diplomacy in the light of climate change.

## Grading

You will be assessed on:

- *In-class participation - 60%*  
The grading of your participation shall reflect your understanding of in-class learnings, personal research, understanding of climate news of the week and commenting on your peers' in-class presentations as well as your thoughts after studying the required material prior to each class.

There is no “bad” question and sometimes there are no “good” answers either. Climate change is a very complex issue and it can yield a lot of anguish. I will not judge you (though I may challenge you) for any position you may take and will expect the same level of empathy among all peers.

Climate negotiation is about preparation and practice, it happens in all kinds of settings and radiates well beyond climate COPs. Knowing where you are speaking from, to whom and in which context is key. You will be requested to participate in one “mock Paris Agreement” (whole class, session 8) and one “oral practice” (small groups of 1 to 3 students).

For the oral practice, you will choose (eventually propose) a topic and a “character” during the first session. The “characters” will be real-life people (example 1: an Exxon Mobil lobbyist and a Democrat senator’s chief of staff up for reelection; example 2: a summit discussion between Joe Biden and Xi Jinping; example 3: UN Secretary General and Greta Thunberg). You will be expected to source the information you base your acting upon, submitting the video links, texts or any other material that provided you with your inspiration. No props expected (though accepted if you feel like it): this is not meant to be a theatrical show but rather to offer you additional insight from “putting yourself in the shoes of X or Y”. During your oral practice, you will be allotted a strict 3-minute timing each, followed by +/- 10-minutes jointly answering questions from your peers and +/- 10-minutes debrief.

- *Final exam - 40%*

The final exam will consist of an essay, to be picked from a choice of two questions, allowing you to mobilize the broad range of knowledge acquired in the course.

You will be expected to take the exam online, all at the same time, lasting 2 hours. There will be no good or bad answer. Rather, you will be graded on your capacity to reflect critically, leveraging the concepts and skills learnt in-class, on the question of your choice.

## **Course Commitments and Outcomes**

Over 12 course sessions, you will spend a total of:

- 2.5 hours per week in class (30 hours total),

- 2 hours per week reviewing the previous week’s learnings (24 hours total). You are expected to take notes in-class, though all class material will be shared on the students’ portal.

- 0.5 hour per *day* reading your national press or listening to TV news and an extra 30 minutes per *week* taking note of climate change topics (50 hours total),

- 3 hours per week reading or listening to the upcoming class’s material (36 hours total),

- 0.5 hour per week answering an online quiz on the previous session (6 hours total)

In addition, it is recommended to spend 0.5-1 hour with the teacher to discuss your understanding of the course as well as your future expectations related to climate change.

You should spend a good amount of time preparing for the in-class oral practice, both on your own and with your group (10 hours in total).

The final essay should be prepared by broadly reviewing the class material and keep reading the press for climate news (24 hours in total)

Total Commitment is 180 hours.

### **Session structure**

A typical session will be broken down along the following lines.

*Nota bene:* This is to give you an idea of the way in-class work will be structured, yet this is merely indicative, pending on the availability of relevant external guests and their respective time zones – to be completed in the course of the semester.

3 – 3.50 pm: lecture and class discussion (or external guest lecture and Q&A)

3.50 – 4 pm: break

4 – 5 pm: lecture and class discussion (or external guest lecture and Q&A)

5 – 5.30pm: oral practice

### **Accessibility and Accommodations Statement**

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you may require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. You may speak with me before or after class, during the break, during office hours, or by appointment.

If you need accommodations around online learning or in classroom accommodations, please be sure to reach out to [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) for their assistance ([seas@brown.edu](mailto:seas@brown.edu), 401-863-9588). Undergraduates in need of short-term academic advice or support can [contact an academic dean in the College](#) by emailing [college@brown.edu](mailto:college@brown.edu). Graduate students may contact one of the deans in the Graduate School by emailing [graduate\\_school@brown.edu](mailto:graduate_school@brown.edu).

## **Class schedule**

### Module 1: Key notions on climate change

#### ❖ **Session 1, September 13<sup>th</sup>**

Course presentation

Getting to know one another and everyone's expectations for the course

Short knowledge assessment (not graded)

#### **Lecture and discussion: back to the basics**

*Definitions and explanations – what is climate change?*

*GHG, IPCC, UN FCCC, ...*

Choice of oral practice characters and topics for the upcoming weeks

#### **No required reading**

#### **Additional reading:**

- Pierre-Bruno Ruffini. (2018). The intergovernmental Panel on climate change and the Science-Diplomacy nexus. *Global Policy*, 9, 73-77.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12588>

#### ❖ **Session 2, September 20<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Lecture and discussion: What are the impacts of climate change?**

*How to read an IPCC report (confidence range, likelihood, emission pathways)?*

*What's already happening?*

*What to expect in the coming 10-80 years?*

**Oral practice:** *the case for an indigenous people's platform*

#### **Useful resource:**

[Impact Map | Climate Impact Lab](#) : its impact map shows the temperature change up to the end of this century

[Sea Level Rise - Map Viewer | NOAA Climate.gov](#) : this interactive map allows you to check on the coastal impacts of sea level rise, high tide flooding, vulnerability, and provides local scenarios.

[Sixth Assessment Report \(ipcc.ch\)](#)- Set of slides with key figures

#### **Required reading.**

IPCC, Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C, Summary for Policy Makers, 2018, (<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/spm/>) (nota bene: you should only read the **summary for policy makers**, not the whole report).

**Recommended movie:**

Gore, Al, and Davis Guggenheim. *An Inconvenient Truth*. Paramount Vantage, 2006. This movie remains accurate, showcasing climate impact trends that have kept worsening to this date.

**Additional reading:**

Comberti, Claudia, Thomas F Thornton, Michaela Korodimou, Meghan Shea, and Kimaren Ole Riamit. "Adaptation and Resilience at the Margins: Addressing Indigenous Peoples' Marginalization at International Climate Negotiations." *Environment : science and policy for sustainable development* 61, no. 2 (2019): 14–30

**❖ Session 3, September 27th****Lecture and discussion: the question of responsibility**

*What is the overall cost of climate change? How is it valued?*

*Historical responsibility in the context of climate change.*

*Climate impacts and the notions of justice and equity.*

*Loss and damage.*

**Oral practice:** *Can all countries remain insured in the face of climate change, how about low-lying islands or shores?*

**Required readings:****About quantifying the cost of climate change**

- Auffhammer, Maximilian. "Quantifying Economic Damages from Climate Change." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32, no. 4 (2018): 33-52.

This article provides perspective on the difficulty to economically assess the cost of climate change, serving as a necessary critique to Nordhaus and others, pointing out several factors: taking into account climate as a global phenomenon vs local impacts; how we rate the anticipation of climate change's impact on future economic growth (discount rate); which sectors we include in our anticipations (leaving out ecosystemic services).

**On climate justice**

- Kanbur, S. M. Ravi, and Henry Shue. *Climate Justice : Integrating Economics and Philosophy* First edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.  
Chapter 5, "Climate Change and Inequity: How to Think about Inequities in Different Dimensions" by Nicole Hassoun and Anders Herlitz touches upon the equity between countries, as well as within countries and between individuals regardless of their location.  
Chapter 13, "Long-Term Climate Justice" by John Nolt makes a compelling case for taking into account future generations, despite the "non-identity problem".

**On loss and damage:**

Paris Agreement, **article 8**

**Additional readings:**

**For a broad overview of “loss and damage”:**

- Bouwer L.M. (2019) Observed and Projected Impacts from Extreme Weather Events: Implications for Loss and Damage. In: Mechler R., Bouwer L., Schinko T., Surminski S., Linnerooth-Bayer J. (eds) *Loss and Damage from Climate Change. Climate Risk Management, Policy and Governance*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi-org.revproxy.brown.edu/10.1007/978-3-319-72026-5\\_3](https://doi-org.revproxy.brown.edu/10.1007/978-3-319-72026-5_3)  
This chapter provides a clear explanation on what “loss and damage” means from a meteorological perspective
- Mechler, Reinhard., Laurens M. Bouwer, Thomas. Schinko, Swenja. Surminski, and JoAnne. Linnerooth-Bayer. *Loss and Damage from Climate Change Concepts, Methods and Policy Options* 1st ed. 2019. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019.

**For a perspective from (re)insurance companies**, see the SwissRE annual report SIGMA: [sigma-1-2021-en.pdf \(swissre.com\)](https://www.swissre.com/sigma-1-2021-en.pdf)

❖ **Session 4, October 4th**

**Lecture and discussion: the emergence of a political issue**

*From Rio to Glasgow. What's the UNFCCC about and how did it evolve to date.*

**Special guest: Paul Watkinson, on his experience as a climate negotiator since the first COPs, former lead negotiator for the EU, member of the COP21 French negotiating team, head of SBSTA.**

**Required reading:**

- 3-pager on the Key historical developments of climate governance (available in CANVAS, as extracted from J. Gupta, see below Additional reading list)
- Susan Biniiaz, "Comma but Differentiated Responsibilities: Punctuation and 30 Other Ways Negotiators have Resolved Issues in the International Climate Change Regime," *Michigan Journal of Environmental & Administrative Law* 6, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 37-64.  
This piece on climate-law making is a clearcut introduction to ‘wording’ techniques that negotiators have been using to resolve disagreements, written by one of the architects of the Paris agreement and the current Deputy to Climate Czar John Kerry. While being a Legal article, it delves into some of the topics that have had to be overcome in order to reach consensus since the adoption of the



United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 to date.

**Additional reading:**

- Gupta, Joyeeta. “*Climate Change Governance: History, Future, and Triple-Loop Learning?*” Wiley interdisciplinary reviews. *Climate change* 7, no. 2 (2016): 192–210.

This journal article presents the evolution of the global climate governance in a three phases approach, from the 1980s to 2015. It is an analysis from a systemic thinking perspective. Not an easy read, yet an excellent and concise account.

- Sweet, William. *Climate Diplomacy from Rio to Paris: The Effort to Contain Global Warming*, Yale University Press, 2016.

**Part III only.** This book is a journalistic account of climate negotiations with a limited US-perspective. Much of the focus is on the main drivers of the negotiations (politicians, influential negotiators, civil society prominent advocates). As such, it may not be the most formal or objective account of the historical unfolding in climate negotiations, but it gives a good sense of what happened and how it happened.

❖ (no session on October 11<sup>th</sup>: indigenous people’s day)

## Module 2: the Paris Agreement, a new framework for global climate governance

### ❖ **Session 5, October 18th**

#### **Lecture and discussion: what is accounted for?**

*The Transparency system.*

*Efforts in mitigation and the growing place of adaptation.*

*Market and non-market approaches.*

**Oral practice** *Bolivia and Brazil*

**Special guest, Derik Broekhoff, Stockholm Environment Institute,**

#### **Required reading:**

- Paris Agreement, **article 2, 4, 6, 7, 13.**
- Schneider, Lambert, Maosheng Duan, Robert Stavins, Kelley Kizzier, Derik Broekhoff, Frank Jotzo, Harald Winkler, Michael Lazarus, Andrew Howard, and Christina Hood. "Double Counting and the Paris Agreement Rulebook." *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)* 366, no. 6462 (2019): 180–183.

### ❖ **Session 6, October 25th**

#### **Lecture and discussion: the ambition system**

*The global stocktake and nationally determined contributions' ratchet mechanism*

**Oral practice** *The US case and the implications of stepping out and coming back for the overall ambition*

#### **Useful resource :**

[COP26-Explained.pdf \(netdna-ssl.com\)](#)

[Patricia Espinosa on National Climate Plans Submitted by 31 July | UNFCCC](#)

[NDC Synthesis Report | UNFCCC](#)

#### **Required reading:**

Paris Agreement, **article 4, 14.**

### ❖ **Session 7, November 1st**

#### **Lecture and discussion: Supporting the implementation**

*Climate finance, capacity building and technology transfers*

*The "100 bn" and next.*

**Oral practice** - *What is a developed vs. developing country and where does China stand?*

**The “tragedy of the horizon”**

*In-person multiple play of prisoner’s dilemma games*

**Useful resource:** look out for reviews of the climate aspects of “World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings” that will take place on 15 - 17 October 2021 (should be about mobilizing climate aid and relief funds).

And to the “Global Investment Summit: Building a green future together” that will take place on 19 October 2021 (likely more of a business/finance perspective there).

**On the qualification of China as a developing country** see for example: [Columbia | SIPA Center on Global Energy Policy | Is China Still a Developing Country? And Why It Matters for Energy and Climate](#)

**On climate finance,** [The broken \\$100-billion promise of climate finance — and how to fix it \(nature.com\)](#)

**On the “tragedy of the horizon”,** read the Speech by Mr Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England and Chairman of the Financial Stability Board, at Lloyd’s of London, London, 29 September 2015 ([Mark Carney: Breaking the tragedy of the horizon - climate change and financial stability \(bis.org\)](#)) or its commentary by John Lorinc, “The Tragedy of the Horizon.” *Corporate knights* 15, no. 1 (2016): 18–22.

❖ **Session 8, November 8th**

**Lecture and discussion: re-enacting the Paris agreement’s adoption**

*In-person mock negotiations of the Paris agreement.*

**Required reading**

- *The Paris Agreement,* 2015,  
([https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf))

## Module 3: what else?

### ❖ **Session 9, November 15th**

#### **Debrief on COP26.**

#### **Lecture and discussion: the measure of success**

*Where are we going?*

*Weighing the achievements and what remains to be done.*

*UNEP Gap report.*

**Oral practice** – *Holding countries accountable to their commitments, the Urgenda case*

### ❖ **Session 10, November 22<sup>nd</sup>**

#### **Lecture and discussion: The multiple actors of climate negotiations**

#### **Non-state actors take the lead**

*An innovation from Lima: the action agenda. Is that where action actually happens?*

*Non-state actors in climate summits, recognition of the States' decline?*

**Oral practice** – *Exxon lobbyist and Congressperson up for reelection*

### ❖ **Session 11, November 29<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Lecture and discussion: where's trade?**

*How tough questions were left out, back to realism in international relations.*

#### **Lecture and discussion: what's next for us to tackle?**

*Leaving fossil fuels in the ground*

*The question of "climate sinks" and geoeengineering "solutions".*

*The loss of biodiversity.*

*The essence of sobriety and consumer behavior.*

#### **Special guest: Clementine Renevier, on biodiversity stakes in international negotiations, and the link between trade and deforestation**

### ❖ **Session 12, December 6<sup>th</sup>**

As a means to conclude the course, we will focus our last session on the very idea of multilateral diplomacy and common goods.

*Where's Kissinger?*

Overall debrief of the course.

Explanations about the final exam.